



May 8, 2000

Nuke power area turns to solar energy

Asahi Shimbun

April 29, 2000

FUKUI-Residents in a prefecture home to a large concentration of nuclear power plants are turning toward solar energy, helped in part by a new project for joint ownership of a generation system.

Members of Ecoplan Fukui are seeking individuals and groups willing to invest in the venture. Each investor will be asked to contribute 100,000 yen. The money will be used to construct an energy generation system using solar panels installed on the roofs of residents' homes. Any electricity left over after household use will be sold to the electric power company.

Group members estimate that generating about 2,600 kilowatts of electricity annually will lead to an income of 65,000 yen to 70,000 yen. This figure will be allocated among the investors.

While solar energy is more environmentally friendly than most other forms of energy and much safer than nuclear power, the cost of constructing a single generation system can run to about 3 million yen for a system with an output of 3 kilowatts.

Even after subsidies are received, one system can cost

about 2 million yen. Group members are hoping that spreading the burden of installation costs will help to promote solar energy in the prefecture.

According to the New Energy Foundation, a promotion group for solar energy, Fukui has among the fewest solar power generators of any prefecture in Japan.

Only one municipality in the prefecture offers a subsidy for the installation of a solar energy generation system. That subsidy requires the person installing the system to first receive a subsidy from the New Energy Foundation. So far, no resident has applied.